

Ephesians

The Unified Body of Christ

Lesson #7 for August 12, 2023

Scriptures: Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 2:3; Psalm 68:18; Acts 2; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11,27-30; Isaiah 5:4.

1. To what does the phrase *the unified body of Christ* refer?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] One of Aesop's fables is called "The Belly and the Feet." It goes like this: "The belly and the feet were arguing about their importance, and when the feet kept saying that they were so much stronger that they even carried the stomach around, the stomach replied, 'But, my good friends, if I didn't take in food, you wouldn't be able to carry anything.'"—Lloyd W. Daly, *Aesop Without Morals* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961), p. 148.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, August 5.†§

2. In Ephesians 1-3, **Paul talked about bringing the entire universe together as a unified whole.** That is the way it was and is supposed to be. He focused on Jews getting together with Gentiles to form a single unified body on this earth. He talked about ways in which God had blessed them and encouraged them to get together as brothers and sisters. But, then, he turned in Ephesians 4 and talked about what was happening within the church itself. Paul recognized that just because people become nominal Christians does not mean that all their problems were gone. There was still work to be done. To get the big picture for today, **please read Ephesians 4:1-16.**
3. Paul suggested that there were several ways in which God had given gifts to various church members and that those gifts were for the purpose of edifying or enlightening the church and bringing them into greater unity. In Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, in addition to our passage for this week, Paul talked about those gifts. Those gifts were not only to help the members within the church but also to encourage them to reach into the world and draw in others.

[BSG:] Paul begins the second half of Ephesians (chapters 4–6) with a stirring call to unity, but in two major parts. First, in Ephesians 4:1–6 he asks believers to nurture "the unity of the Spirit" by exhibiting unity-building virtues (*Eph. 4:1–3*), a call he supports with a poetic list of seven "ones" (*Eph. 4:4–6*). Second, in Ephesians 4:7–16, Paul identifies the victorious, exalted Jesus as the Source of grace in people who lead in sharing the gospel (*Eph. 4:7–10*) and describes how they, together with all church members, contribute to the health, growth, and unity of the body of Christ (*Eph. 4:11–16*).

As the chapter begins, Paul invites Christians to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (*Eph. 4:1, ESV*). He used the verb *walk* in the figurative sense of *to behave*, or *to live* (see *Eph. 2:2, 10; Eph. 4:17; Eph. 5:2, 8, 15*). When Paul refers to their calling, he refers to the call to Christian faith (*Eph. 1:18; Eph. 2:4–6, 13*). Paul urges believers to practice a unifying behavior that reflects God's ultimate plan (*Eph. 4:9*,

10). He begins that emphasis here with his call to practice virtues that lead to unity (*Eph. 4:1–3*), such as humility, gentleness, and patience.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, August 6.^{†§}

4. Paul had already reminded church members from where they had come. He recognized that all of us have naturally gotten caught up in evil ways. However, now God is calling to us to begin a better life. It must be a life of love for others and good deeds. See Ephesians 2:2,10; Ephesians 4:17; Ephesians 5:2,8,15.
5. Remember that Paul never knew Jesus Christ while He was on this earth. However, Paul saw Him revealed in vision on the road to Damascus and, later, in other visions. Paul recalled those visions and said that it was God's plan that we rise up to be living in heaven with Jesus in His exalted state. (Ephesians 2:4-6,13) This leads us to ask two questions: (1) How did the blood of Christ bring the Gentiles nearer to God and to the Jews? (2) When did or when will human beings be raised up to rule with Him in the heavenly world?

Ephesians 4:1-3: ¹ I urge you, then—I who am a prisoner because I serve the Lord: live a life that measures up to the standard God set when he called you. ² Be always **humble, gentle, and patient**. Show your love by being tolerant with one another. ³ Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Ephesians 4:1-3). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

[BSG:] Paul elsewhere explains the term *humility*, in Ephesians 4:2 (*ESV*; “lowliness” in *NKJV*), by adding the idea to “count others more significant than yourselves” (*Phil. 2:3, ESV*). Humility, then, may be understood not as a negative virtue of self-deprecation (see *Col. 2:18, 23*) but as a positive one of appreciating and serving others.

Gentleness (*Eph. 4:2, ESV, NKJV*) may be explained as “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance” and also means “courtesy, considerateness, meekness.”—Frederick Danker, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 861.

Finally, *patience* (*ESV*; compare “**longsuffering**,” *NKJV*) is being able to bear up under provocation or trials. **These qualities, then, all gather around the theme of turning away from self-importance and, instead, focusing on the value of others. [Compare Revelation 14:12.]**

***Humility, gentleness, patience.* Think about how these attributes would help unify us as a people. How do we learn to cultivate these virtues?**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, August 6.^{†§}

6. ***Do you find yourself attracted to people who are humble, gentle, and patient? If so, why?***
7. How did Paul support his theme of the unity of the church? What kind of oneness did he describe in Ephesians 4:4-6?

Ephesians 4:4-6: ⁴There is one **body** and one **Spirit**, just as there is one **hope** to which God has called you. ⁵There is one **Lord**, one **faith**, one **baptism**; ⁶there is one **God and Father** of all, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all.—*Good News Bible*.*†

8. **How big was the church of Paul's world? We do not have any idea.**

[BSG:] Note carefully two ideas about the unity of the church (*Eph. 4:1–6*). First, unity is a spiritual fact, rooted in these seven “ones,” a reality to be celebrated (*Eph. 4:4–6*). Second, this unity requires our zeal to nurture and grow it (*Eph. 4:3*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, August 7.†§

9. Repeatedly in Ephesians, Paul called upon the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, working together to accomplish the things that need(ed) to be accomplished in the church.

[BSG:] Paul declares that the unity of the church is, in fact, the “unity of the Spirit” (*Eph. 4:3*). In a rather poetic fashion, the apostle tells his readers that this unity is essentially related to all the Persons of the Godhead. We are “one body” because there is “one Spirit” who called us “in one hope” (*Eph. 4:4*). In the same way, in our “one Lord” we have “one faith, one baptism” (*Eph. 4:5*). Ultimately, the church is united because we have “one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (*Eph. 4:6, NASB*). Thus, the church exists because God created us and called us. In addition, the church exists as a united body because the God who created and called her is One: Three Persons, yet one God. The church cannot exist without God; the church cannot exist if it is not “one”; and **the church cannot be one if it is not rooted in the biblical teaching of One God in Three Persons.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 95.†§

10. Having read these passages from Paul, do we understand what it means to be partakers of the divine nature, having God dwelling in us?

11. Paul recognized that Christ was no longer on this earth to guide them. Rather, He is in heaven, seated next to the throne of God, surrounded by angels willing to do His bidding. Paul described the exalted Christ as a giver of gifts.

Ephesians 4:7-10: ⁷ Each one of us has received a special gift in proportion to what Christ has given. ⁸As the scripture [Psalm 68:18 in the Greek] says: “When he went up to the very heights, he took many captives with him; he gave gifts to people.”

⁹Now, what does “he went up” mean? It means that first he came down to the lowest depths of the earth. ¹⁰So the one who came down is the same one who went up, above and beyond the heavens, to fill the whole universe with his presence.—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] ... ^[9]“Notice that it says ‘he ascended.’ This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. ^[10] And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself” (*Eph. 4:7–10, NLT*). What is happening here, and what is Paul's point in these verses?...

Paul ... [in Ephesians 4:8] quoted Psalm 68:18, which reads: “When you ascended to the heights, you led a crowd of captives. You received gifts from the people, even from those who rebelled against you” (*NLT*). Psalm 68:18 portrays the Lord, Yahweh [*sic*], as a conquering general who, having conquered His enemies, ascends the hill on which His capital city is built, with the captives of battle in His train (see *Ps. 68:1, 2*). He then receives tribute (“received gifts”) from His conquered foes (noting that Paul adjusts this imagery to the exalted Christ “giving gifts,” based on the wider context of the psalm; see *Ps. 68:35*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, August 8.^{†§}

Psalm 68:1-2: ¹ God rises up and scatters his enemies.

Those who hate him run away in defeat.

²As smoke is blown away, so he drives them off;

as wax melts in front of the fire,

so do the wicked perish in God’s presence.—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] *1. Translating Ephesians 4:9.* Some translations indicate that the descent occurs before the ascent (e.g., *NKJV*, “He also first descended”; *KJV*, *RSV*, *ESV*, *NASB*). Other translations follow the Greek text more closely, leaving the issue of the timing of the ascent and descent open (e.g., *NIV*, “What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?” *ASV*, *HCSB*, *LEB*, *NLT*), which allows for the view, expressed in ... [this] study, that the narrative order of Psalm 68:18 should be followed, with Christ’s exaltation to heaven (the “ascent”) occurring first, followed by His “descent” in the Spirit.

2. Leading captivity captive. In quoting Psalm 68:18 from the Greek Old Testament, called the Septuagint [*sic*] (an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament), Paul uses a phrase in Ephesians 4:8 that reads literally, “he took captive captivity” (reflected in some translations, e.g., *KJV*, *NKJV*, *NRSV*), but which is widely affirmed to mean, “he took as prisoners a group of captives” (reflected in the *ESV*, *NASB*, *NIV*, etc.). Seventh-day Adventists have often understood the phrase to refer to Christ’s act of taking back with Him to heaven, at His ascension, those raised in a special resurrection at the time of His own resurrection (*Matt. 27:51–53*). These constitute a “wave sheaf,” firstfruits of the redeemed, that He presents to the Father on His return to the courts of heaven (see *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1022; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 834; compare *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 785, 786). Alternatively, in line with Colossians 2:15, the passage could be taken as a picture of Christ’s conquest over His foes—Satan and his evil angels—who are portrayed as defeated captives.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, August 11.^{†§}

[BSG:] If we follow the order of Psalm 68:18, the ascent—Christ’s ascension to heaven (*Eph. 1:21–23*)—occurs first, followed by the *descent* in which the risen, exalted Jesus gives gifts and fills all things. This is Paul’s way of depicting the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit (see *Acts 2*). This view is confirmed by Ephesians 4:11, 12, which identify the *gifts* provided

by the exalted Jesus as gifts of the Spirit.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, August 8.†§

Ephesians 1:21-23: ²¹Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords; he has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next. ²²God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. ²³**The church is Christ's body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

12. So, what is implied by that final verse, Ephesians 1:23?

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **Christ ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. When, after Christ's ascension, the Spirit came down as promised, like a rushing, mighty wind, filling the whole place where the disciples were assembled, what was the effect? Thousands were converted in a day. We have taught, we have expected that an angel is to come down from heaven, that the earth will be lightened with his glory. Then we shall behold an ingathering of souls similar to that witnessed on the day of Pentecost.**—Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*,* February 1, 1893, par. 1; *Ye Shall Receive Power**€ 158.5-6.†‡

13. Let us look at the gifts that Christ is offering to us as a unified church. Has God given each of us one gift? Do we understand that we are apostles, prophets, evangelists, or perhaps, pastors/teachers? Or, are there other important “gifts” that Paul talked about elsewhere?

Ephesians 4:11-13: ¹¹ It was he who “gave gifts”; he appointed some to be **apostles**, others to be **prophets**, others to be **evangelists**, others to be **pastors and teachers**. ¹²He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ. ¹³And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature.—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] Paul identifies four groups of “gifted” people as part of the treasure trove of the exalted Jesus that He gives to His church: (1) apostles; (2) prophets; (3) evangelists; (4) shepherds (*ESV*) and teachers (the structure of the Greek phrase suggests these are a single group). Christ gives these gifts to accomplish important work: “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (*Eph. 4:12, ESV*) and “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (*Eph. 4:13, ESV*).

This last point was of special importance to early Adventists, who were reflecting on the spiritual gifts of Ellen G. White. Does the Bible validate the functioning of the gift of prophecy in the church only during the time of the apostles? Or does the gift continue until the return of Christ? **The early Adventists found their answer in Ephesians 4:13 and shared it through a story about the captain of a ship who was bound to follow**

the instructions provided for a voyage. As the ship neared port, the captain found that the instructions informed him that a pilot would come on board to help guide the vessel. To remain true to the original instructions, he must allow the pilot to board and obey the further guidance offered. “Who now heed that original book of directions? Those who reject the pilot, or those who receive him, as that book instructs them? Judge ye.”—Uriah Smith, “Do We Discard the Bible by Endorsing the Visions?” *Review and Herald*, January 13, 1863, p. 52.

We should be careful when we identify “shepherds” (or “pastors”), “teachers,” and “evangelists,” since we think of these positions within our own context and time. As far as we are able to determine, in Paul’s day these would all have been lay leaders who were serving the house churches of Ephesus [and throughout Asia Minor or modern western Turkey] (compare 1 Pet. 2:9, Acts 2:46, Acts 12:12).—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Wednesday, August 9.†§

14. And what did Paul expect to see as a result of the oneness within the church? Reading again:

Ephesians 4:13: And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ’s full stature.—*Good News Bible*.*

15. Try to imagine what it would be like to be a member in a church described by that verse! Could we truly become partakers of the divine nature? Has that ever happened in the Christian church?
16. However, **the church was never intended to be a comfortable club. The gifts that were given to the church were for the purpose of reaching out into the community.** So, what did Paul mean when he said, “Preached to everybody in the world”? (Colossians 1:23)
17. After discussing the one body, one Spirit, one hope to which God had called them, Paul moved on.

[BSG:] The list then offers three more elements, “one Lord” (a reference to Christ), “one faith” (meaning the content of what Christians believe, *Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:23; Col. 2:7; Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:1, 6*), and “one baptism” (*compare Eph. 5:26*) before concluding with an extended description of God as “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all, and in all” (*Eph. 4:6, ESV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, August 7.†§

18. Then, Paul got specific about what he wanted to see. If the church truly received these gifts and was exercising them as they should, it would have led the church to grow up in Christ into perfect unity and still will do that today. So, what threatens that unity?
19. We note that Paul was clear in his statement that these spiritual gifts were for the purpose of building up the entire body of Christ, the church. Reading some again:

Ephesians 4:12-16: ¹²He did this to prepare all God’s people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ. ¹³And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the

Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature. ¹⁴Then we shall no longer be children, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful people, who lead others into error by the tricks they invent. ¹⁵Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head. ¹⁶Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love.—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] Paul perceives an environment not unlike our own in which various ideas, such as “every wind of doctrine” and “deceitful schemes” (*ESV*), are thrust upon believers. **He uses three sets of images to describe the dangers of wayward theology:** (1) the immaturity of childhood, “so that we may no longer be children” (*ESV*); (2) danger on the high seas, “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (*ESV*); and (3) being swindled by clever people who, like gamblers, practice sleight of hand. Paul uses figuratively the Greek word *kubeia* (“dice playing”) to mean “cunning” (*ESV*) or “trickery” (*NKJV*).

Paul believes divisiveness to be an important mark of error: That which nourishes and grows the body and helps it hold together is good while that which depletes and divides it is evil. By turning from the divisive teaching and to that of tested and trusted teachers (*Eph. 4:11*), they will advance toward true Christian maturity and play effective roles in the body of Christ (*Eph. 4:12, 13; compare Eph. 4:15, 16*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, August 10.^{†§}

20. One of the marks of a living organism is that it can heal itself. By that definition, is the church a living organism? Should it be?
21. Is each one of us an active part of the church, exercising our individual gifts to reach out into the community? Reading again:

Ephesians 4:12,16: ¹² **He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ....** ¹⁶ Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love.—*Good News Bible*.*[†] [What if every church member were active in spreading the gospel?][‡]

22. ***What are we doing today to build up the body of Christ (the church)?***
23. ***What divisive ideas or “winds of doctrine” are going through our church today? Are we promoting unity in the church if we are stuck on divisive teachings?***
24. Read Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; and 1 Peter 4:10. Compare the gifts that are described in each of these passages.

[BSG:] So far, Paul has explained the power of God's salvation and how it operates in the history of the world, uniting Jews and Gentiles into a new humanity in Christ. In Ephesians 4:1–17, Paul continues the theme of unity.

By so doing, Paul emphasizes that unity is an indispensable attribute or mark of the church. Unity is the result of God's salvation, but it is also God's tool for fulfilling His mission for the church and through the church. **For this reason, Paul moves beyond the theme of the unity of the Jews and Gentiles in the church to focus on the church's internal unity in life and mission.** Now that in Christ there is no Jew nor Gentile, now that in Christ we are all brothers and sisters without respect to ethnicity, Paul discusses the unity of all Christians as members of the same body and involved in the same mission of Christ. [Compare Galatians 2:11-14.]

The unity of the church is achieved in several ways:

- (1) by sharing in Christ's attitudes of humility, gentleness, and patience;
- (2) by contemplating the ultimate model for the life of the church: the Godhead in the Three Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and Their work in Creation and Redemption;
- (3) by Christ's unifying tools of salvation that constitute the church—one hope, one faith, and one baptism; and
- (4) by the spiritual gifts through which God blesses the church to grow and unite in one body in Christ and accomplish its mission in the world.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 93.††

25. ***If the people of the church are not united and are not demonstrating love, gentleness, and patience with each other, then are they going to be successful in reaching out to the community?***

26. God incarnated Himself, coming down to this world, taking upon Himself the garb of humanity in order to reach us and teach us. We can never reach up to heaven to get close to Him.

27. So, what examples can we see from the heavenly mansions that will help us?

[BSG:] Paul roots the unity of the church in the very nature of the Christian God, the triune God. In fact, the Epistle to the Ephesians is filled with references to the various Persons of the Godhead that reveal Paul's grand vision of all Three Persons of the Godhead at work in the plan of salvation, in creating and building the church. [See John 17:20-26.]—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 94.‡

28. Paul likened the unity that is supposed to develop within the church to the unity that exists among the three Members of the Godhead.

29. In Ephesians 1, Paul assured us that the day was/is coming when through the "blood of Christ" or His sacrifice on this earth, our sins will be forgiven, and we will be healed. Then, when the time is right, the grace of God will be poured out in large measure, and God will complete bringing all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth with Christ as head. So, when will that happen?

30. How will we be changed if that happens?

Ephesians 1:13-14: ¹³ And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. **You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the**

Holy Spirit he had promised. ¹⁴**The Spirit is the guarantee** that we shall receive what God has promised his people, and this assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who are his. Let us praise his glory!—*Good News Bible*.*†

31. In summary, having built up his case in Ephesians 1 that God intends for all beings in the universe to come together in unity, then in Ephesians 4, following suggestions from Psalm 68:18, Paul called for unity in the church.

[BSG:] In Ephesians 4, the apostle follows a similar pattern to explain that Christ ascended (*Eph. 4:8*) and was exalted (*Eph. 4:10*). Being the “head” of the church (*Eph. 4:15*)—that is, His body (*Eph. 4:16*)—Christ “gave gifts” to His people (*Eph. 4:8*). These gifts are called Christ’s gifts and are also associated with “grace”: “to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (*Eph. 4:7, NKJV*). However, these gifts are not blessings for saving sinners, as in Ephesians 1, but rather blessings or gifts of empowerment for the constitution, unity, and mission of the church. Paul identifies these gifts as “apostles . . . prophets . . . evangelists . . . pastors and teachers” (*Eph. 4:11*). Elsewhere, Paul calls them gifts of grace (*charismata; Rom. 12:6–8, 1 Cor. 12:4*) or gifts of the Spirit (*pneumatikois; 1 Cor 12:1*), given and distributed by the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor. 12:4, 7–11*) to the members of the body of Christ (*1 Cor. 12:12, 13*).

Thus, although Paul uses a very similar pattern of themes in Ephesians 1 and 4, he addresses different aspects of the church. **While in Ephesians 1 the apostle talks about the salvation of humans, in Ephesians 4 he discusses the existence, unity, and mission of the church.** That is why, in Ephesians 4, the risen and ascended Lord Jesus (*Eph. 4:8–10*) gives each member of the church “grace . . . according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (*Eph. 4:7*). The “giving” or the “grace” is an assignment here (*Eph. 4:11*), and not the grace of salvation or forgiveness. It is the gift of “equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ” (*Eph. 4:12, NASB*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 95-96.†§

32. God’s first goal with us as human beings is to bring us into a relationship with other church members through conversion and baptism. Both God and Paul recognize that the work is not finished at that point. So, Paul talked about gifts that are given to help build up the body of Christ, the church. In conclusion, let us notice that Paul’s theology in Ephesians 4 leads to several major conclusions.

[BSG:] **First**, the church is not a human organization, built and sustained by humans and for human purposes. Rather, the church is created, sustained, and guided in its mission by God Himself.

Second, reflecting the image of its triune God, the church is, and must be, united. In His high-priestly prayer, Jesus pleaded with the Father that the church “may all be one; just as You . . . are in Me and I in You . . . so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (*John 17:21, NASB*).

Third, this unity is not the product of human will or genius, but the work of the Father, Christ Jesus, and the Holy Spirit working in and through the church.

Fourth, the triune God works out the unity and growth of the church through the spiritual gifts. Thus, the spiritual gifts are not an optional program of the church to be used when deemed necessary by church members. Rather, the spiritual gifts are the way that God constitutes, sustains, and guides the church. It is important to note that when talking about the essence and the unity of the church, Paul does not propose a hierarchical and sacramental governance structure of the church. Rather, while promoting a good organization of the church, the apostle viewed the source of the existence, unity, and mission of the church as being rooted in the triune God, who is the Head of the church and of the spiritual gifts He bestowed to manifest His presence and work in the church.

Fifth, so important for biblical theology are the topics of the Godhead and the spiritual gifts that Seventh-day Adventists consider them in numerous statements of belief. **The Godhead** is discussed in five fundamental beliefs: 2 (which discusses the biblical teaching of the triune God), 3 (“God the Father”), 4 (“God the Son”), 5 (“God the Holy Spirit”), and 10 (“The Experience of Salvation,” which discusses the implication of all Three Persons of the Godhead in the salvation of humanity). **The doctrine of the church** is richly articulated in seven fundamental beliefs: 12 (“The Church”), 13 (“The Remnant and Its Mission”), 14 (“Unity in the Body of Christ”), 15 (“Baptism”), 16 (“The Lord’s Supper”), 17 (“Spiritual Gifts and Ministries”), and 18 (“The Gift of Prophecy”).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 95-96.†‡§

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